

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 160

By Ford, O.

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Dr. John Jefferson DeBerry, Sr., of Memphis.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. John Jefferson DeBerry, Sr., of Memphis; and

WHEREAS, Dr. John DeBerry, Sr., was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, born on May 12, 1925, in Senatobia, Mississippi, Dr. DeBerry was one of eleven children born to Ms. Martha Reed and Mr. Ollie DeBerry; and

WHEREAS, as a member of a large family who earned their living as sharecroppers, he knew that hard work and education would be his means of breaking from the confines of tenant farming; and

WHEREAS, Dr. John DeBerry, Sr., served his country with honor and bravery by serving in both the United States Army and Air Force, first as a tank pilot and later as a helicopter pilot; Sergeant DeBerry was a veteran of the Korean War and a former P.O.W.; and

WHEREAS, utilizing the GI Bill to further his education, he worked hard for many years to juggle the demands of school with the responsibilities of caring for his young family; and

WHEREAS, in 1950, he married Pearl Lee Merriweather, who preceded him in death in 1971; the tragic automobile accident that took her life also claimed a daughter and a son; and

WHEREAS, the children who were born to this blessed union are the late Renda DeBerry, the late Patrick DeBerry, Doris A. Bradshaw, Edward Earle DeBerry, Bunny Fay Williams, Tony M. DeBerry, and our esteemed colleague, Representative John J. DeBerry, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Dr. DeBerry later remarried and enjoyed the loving companionship of Dorothy LeSure, and with that union he gained a beloved stepdaughter, Tanger Wright; and

WHEREAS, committing his life to the preaching of the Gospel during the 1950s, Dr. DeBerry became well known for his unique style of preaching and for his wonderful voice; he preached for over fifty years, working tirelessly and generously to perform God's work throughout the region; and

WHEREAS, Dr. John DeBerry, Sr., served as the regular pulpit minister at churches in Cotton Plant, Arkansas; Holly Springs, Mississippi; and at churches in Alamo, Trenton, and Covington, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, he concluded his preaching career at the Snowden Circle Church of Christ in Memphis, and upon his retirement from regular work, he served as one of the ministers of the Coleman Avenue Church of Christ, along with his son, John DeBerry, Jr., the regular pulpit minister; and

WHEREAS, as one of the thousands of men and women who stood bravely in the civil rights struggles, Dr. DeBerry peacefully shepherded the integration of public schools and other public places in the Upper West Tennessee region; and

WHEREAS, recognized for leading the fastest growing NAACP chapter of that time, Dr. DeBerry served with honor and integrity as President of the Crockett County NAACP; and

WHEREAS, he also served as a shop steward for the American Postal Workers Union AFL-CIO until his retirement, throughout his tenure he worked to ensure that his fellow workers' rights were protected and preserved; and

WHEREAS, in addition, Dr. John DeBerry, Sr., was the publisher, owner, and editor of *The Informer*, a weekly newspaper that presented a balanced approach to reporting the facts of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement during a tumultuous time; and

WHEREAS, an entrepreneur since the 1950s, Dr. DeBerry owned a number of successful businesses, including a cleaning company, car lot, downtown Memphis hotel, mailing service and, with his wife, Dorothy, a thriving day care business; and

WHEREAS, Dr. John DeBerry is survived by his wife, Dorothy, his six children, three daughters-in-law, three sons-in-law, twenty-two grandchildren, and eleven great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Dr. John DeBerry, Sr., leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all chosen endeavors; his many accomplishments will inspire his family and friends for generations to come; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional minister, public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Dr. John Jefferson DeBerry, Sr., reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Dr. DeBerry.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.